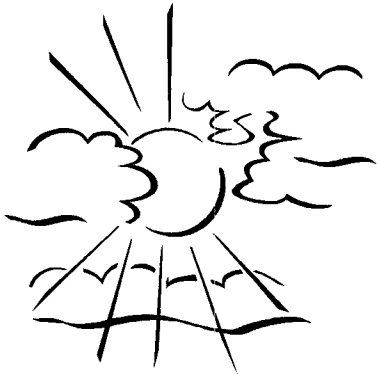


***Department  
of  
Human  
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# **Articles in Today's Clips**

## **Thursday, April 13, 2006**

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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# Ricky Holland's death deserves scrutiny

The Grand Rapids Press

Thursday, April 13, 2006

State authorities are wrong in turning down a House request for records in the death of an Ingham County boy. Child protection issues, including analyzing what went wrong in this child abuse case, need to be looked at independently to spur reforms. The refusal of records is impeding progress. Gov. Jennifer Granholm should see to it the files are released.

The agency involved, the Office of Children's Ombudsman, works to assure the safety and welfare of children who are in need of foster care, adoption and protective services. The ombudsman, appointed by the governor, office is investigating the 7-year-old's case, but that shouldn't rule out a legislative examination of it and other related issues. Well-informed legislators can better advocate for changes in laws and practices.

A five-member child protection subcommittee that includes Rep. Barbara Vender Even, R-Allendale, was announced last month by House Speaker Craig DeRoche. The committee is charged with looking into the specifics of Holland's case, other child protection issues and suggesting reforms. The panel cannot identify areas in need of change without access to all files. Ricky Holland's adopted parents have been ordered to stand trial for his murder. His remains were found in January, he disappeared last summer.

The Department of Human Services' actions, before the death and after, have rightly come under scrutiny.

Frustration over lawmakers being denied details in previous child abuse cases prompted adoption of a law that took effect in 2005. The law expanded lawmakers' powers to investigate. Rep. David Law, R-Commerce Township, chair of the new subcommittee, has sought assistance from Attorney General Michael Cox.

Mr. Law asked Verlie Ruffin, the ombudsman, for all of the Holland case reports in February. Ms. Ruffin declined the records request but told him to expect a report of her office's findings and recommendations and DHS's response.

This is unacceptable. The panel cannot fulfill its oversight responsibilities with a report. The handling of this tragic case has to be tracked from the beginning to the end. When it comes to child abuse cases, particularly deaths, the amount of scrutiny given deserves no limits. Michigan agencies should be working cooperatively with lawmakers for the betterment of children. That shouldn't require the attorney general to have to push the bureaucracy along.

Thursday, April 13, 2006

## **Mom, lawyer dispute abuse charge**

### **Putnam woman's alleged use of belt, paddle on son called 'beating' by prosecutor, 'spanking' by defense.**

Valerie Olander / The Detroit News

A suspended Wayne Memorial High School special education teacher said a second-degree child abuse charge filed against her for paddling her 13-year-old adopted son, and the following media reports, have been unfair.

"It's all been blown way out of proportion," Darcy Cervelli, 38, said Wednesday afternoon from the front door of her well-kept ranch home on Ceder Lake Road, west of the village of Pinckney. If convicted, she could face four years in prison.

Royal Oak attorney Paul J. Stablein said it's a case of a single mother spanking a misbehaving teen.

"Parents should be allowed to discipline their children. It's not up to government to province a home," he said.

Police and prosecutors called it a "beating."

"There was significant bruising," said Livingston Prosecutor David Morse.

The case has been bound over to Livingston County Circuit Court for arraignment on Friday.

The boy and his twin sisters, 7, were removed from the home by Children Protective Services and are staying with a relative.

According to police reports, the teen was grounded and told to do yard chores while his mother went to the grocery store with his sisters on March 11. The girls are Cervelli's biological children.

The boy, who told police he was locked out of the home, used a screw driver in an attempt to get inside two different doors. When the mother returned and couldn't get into one of the damaged doors she used a black-rubber paddle on his bare buttocks. Then, when she discovered the second damaged door, she used a belt, again whacking him on his buttocks and legs.

In each instance, he was hit between two and 30 times, according to police reports and court testimony.

The defense attorney disputed that the boy was locked out of the house. He had access to a walk-out basement, which was furnished with a bathroom, couch, TV and the sisters' bedroom.

"It's ridiculous that the prosecutor charged her with what she was charged with. Second-degree child abuse involves serious injury, when a child is hit with a hard object and seriously injured or somehow burned or scarred. Spanking a child is not child abuse," Stablein said.

A Livingston County Sheriff's deputy came to the house March 12 after a report was made by the boy's 25-year-old sister, who lives in Lincoln Park. The teen had told her about his mother hitting him.

He was taken to McPherson Hospital for an exam and Children Protective Services from the Livingston County office were called. A forensic nurse from a domestic violence shelter spoke to the boy, as well.

Cervelli has been suspended with pay from her job as a special education teacher in the Wayne-Westland Schools since mid-March, when the district learned of the charges. Any felony

involving children is handled in a similar manner, said Superintendent Gregory J. Baracy. He said the school is conducting its own investigation and when concluded will determine whether she can return to her job.

Michigan State University Law Professor Susan Bitensky, a member of Project No Spanking, has been pushing to revise state laws to align with international laws to protect children from any type of abuse. All states except Minnesota permit corporal punishment of children by parents. Meanwhile, Texas Rep. Harold Dutton, chairman of the Juvenile Justice and Family Issues committee, introduced a bill to allow parents to discipline their children as they see fit. The bill received lots of publicity and debate, but has sat in committee since 2003.

*You can reach Valerie Olander at (517) 552 5503 or [volander@detnews.com](mailto:volander@detnews.com).*

# **Mom To Stand Trial For Punishment Of Son**

## ***Authorities Say Boy Suffered Severe Bruising***

POSTED: 2:41 pm EDT April 12, 2006

BRIGHTON, Mich. -- A Livingston County woman has been ordered to stand trial on child abuse charges for what authorities say was the violent paddling of her 13-year-old son. The woman maintains it was a light spanking.

Authorities say Darcy-Ann Cervelli (pictured), of Putnam Township, caused severe bruising to her son's buttocks and legs by beating him with a rubber paddle on March 11. Defense attorney Paul J. Stablein said Cervelli, 38, was only "swatting" her son.

Judge Theresa Brennan of 53rd District Court ordered Cervelli to stand trial on a charge of second-degree child abuse. If convicted, Cervelli could face up to four years in prison.

"I've heard all the facts. This was not a spanking. It was a beating," Brennan said.

Cervelli's circuit court arraignment is scheduled for Friday.

County sheriff's Deputy Andrew Ellis testified last week that Cervelli locked her son out of the home while she went grocery shopping. When she returned home, she punished him for damage he caused to a door when he tried to get into the house. He said Cervelli also spanked her son 10 more times with a belt after finding a second door had been damaged.

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# **Judge says child molester beyond rehab**

## **Man gets life for assaulting girl, 12, in Warren library**

PUBLISHED: April 13, 2006

By Jameson Cook  
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

A Macomb Circuit Court judge exceeded sentencing guidelines when he ordered a 38-year-old Warren man to spend the rest of his life in prison for sexually assaulting a 12-year-girl in a library.

Judge Edward Servitto told Kou Xiong that he could not be rehabilitated, so the judge sentenced him to a term of "natural life" for digitally penetrating the girl in the Burnette Branch of the Warren Library in March 2005.

Xiong already has spent 14 years in prison, 12 years for second-degree criminal sexual conduct on an 8-year-old girl in Bay County and two years for unlawful use of a vehicle in Wayne County. At the time of this incident he was on probation for a larceny offense in Dearborn. "You are beyond rehabilitation," Servitto told Xiong. "With your past history, you can't be a member of this society."

Xiong's prior sex-crime conviction was used in the trial under a new state law that took effect Jan. 1. Xiong was convicted of first-degree criminal sexual conduct, which carries a maximum penalty of life in prison, by a jury March 1 following a trial in Macomb County Circuit Court. Xiong moments before the sentencing told the judge he was "sorry" for inconveniencing the court, but denied being the man who assaulted the girl.

Sentencing guidelines recommended a minimum sentence of 126 months to 420 months. Defense attorney Timothy Kohler tried to convince the judge to score some elements of guidelines lower, arguing against probation staffers who said the victim was especially vulnerable and has suffered psychologically.

Servitto noted that the girl is a special education student.

"It was readily apparent to anyone who had encountered her that it was clearly evident she was susceptible to temptation or persuasion," Servitto said.

During her testimony about the incident, the victim several times turned to Servitto to say, "I didn't do anything wrong, he did," the judge said.

"You could see the difficulty she was having coming to grips with her role and her actions," Servitto said. "There absolutely was psychological impact. The psychological effect was compounded by her mental impairment."

The assault occurred when the girl left a seat in the library at Van Dyke and Studebaker avenues in south Warren to retrieve another book. She walked by the suspect and eventually ended up sitting on his leg or legs. Xiong kissed the girl and grabbed her buttocks, and he put his hand down her pants, digitally penetrating her, assistant Macomb prosecutor Molly Zappitell said. The incident was witnessed by a woman who notified a librarian. Xiong had left the library before police could arrest him. He was identified, but not apprehended until he was caught in June in Oregon fishing without a license.

The victim and her family could not attend the sentencing because of an unrelated medical issue in the family, Zappitell said.

# Child sex abuse draws up to 62 1/2 years in prison

Adrian Daily Telegram

Thursday, April 13, 2006 11:39 AM EDT

*Anthony Darnell McClain, 21, has several prior assaults, Judge Timothy P. Pickard notes in handing down a 32 1/2- to 62 1/2-year prison term.*

By Dennis Pelham

Daily Telegram Staff Writer

ADRIAN - A 21-year-old Adrian man convicted of sexually abusing a young girl last fall stood expressionless Tuesday as a judge handed down a 32 1/2- to 62 1/2-year prison term.

"I'm really remorseful and I'm sorry that this had to happen," said Anthony Darnell McClain during his sentencing in Lenawee County Circuit Court. "I wish I could take it back but I can't."

The admitted sexual abuse of an 8-year-old girl was not a one-time, isolated incident but part of a pattern of behavior that warrants removing McClain from society, said Judge Timothy P. Pickard.

McClain pleaded guilty last month to one of four counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct that carry maximum life prison terms.

Pickard noted that McClain was convicted in a similar child sex abuse case when he was a juvenile and that this case involved repeated assaults from September through November. There is also evidence that two other children, ages 8 and 11, were abused last fall, Pickard said.

State sentencing guidelines called for a minimum prison term of less than 24 years. Pickard said the guidelines are inadequate because they account for one act of sexual penetration but ignore the fact McClain attempted sexual penetration of the young girl five other times.

"It is of considerable worth in deciding a sentence in this particular case," he said. The five failed attempts are objective and verifiable evidence that higher courts require in reviewing appeals of sentences that exceed the guidelines, Pickard said.

There is also strong evidence McClain is a repeat offender, he said. After his conviction of a similar offense as a juvenile, McClain went through a treatment program for sex offenders, Pickard said, but still abused children again.

Public defender Anna Marie Anzalone asked for consideration of the fact that McClain had been successful on probation until he was left alone with the children.

"This is an unfortunate situation all the way around," Anzalone said. She said McClain can be successful when discharged from prison in the future if he is prevented from having contact with minor children.

# 'Touching' puts Shores student teacher on trial in sex charge

Thursday, April 13, 2006

By Heather L. VanDyke  
MUSKEGON CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

Whether an 11-year-old girl was touched by a student teacher for his own sexual gratification or if she took the teacher's actions out of context after watching school movies about "inappropriate touching" is something a jury might decide.

Chief Judge Pro Tem Michael J. Nolan of Muskegon County 60th District Court heard testimony Wednesday at a preliminary examination from the alleged victim, now 12, a student at Mona Shores' Lincoln Park Elementary.

Peter Andrew Morden, 30, of 614 E. Arthur, Rothbury, is charged with second-degree criminal sexual conduct with a person under age 13. The offense carries a possible 15-year prison sentence.

Nolan decided Wednesday there was enough evidence for the case to move to trial in 14th Circuit Court. "It clearly shows probable cause that this was for sexual gratification," referring to the alleged touching by Morden, Nolan said.

Nolan added "no contact with any minor" to the \$7,500 bond, with the exception of his own children. Morden's wife was in the courtroom Wednesday, but his children were not.

Morden was a student teacher at the time the incident occurred on Feb. 2 inside the girl's classroom.

The girl testified Morden never touched her chest or anywhere inside her pants, but placed her on his lap and put his hands on her back and stomach area, under two layers of T-shirts.

Morden's attorney, Shawn P. Davis, said he believes movies the girl watched recently at school about "good touching and bad touching" prior to the Feb. 2 incident, coupled with conversations she had with family members prior to reporting the alleged offense, might have confused her.

"In my opinion, she's been led," Davis said. He said the girl may have had a "crush" on Morden. With her father and other family members in the courtroom Wednesday, the girl was first questioned by Gregory Babbitt, an Ottawa County prosecuting attorney.

The Ottawa County Prosecutor's Office is handling the case because a parent of the victim has a job that causes a conflict of interest, according to Les C. Bowen, chief trial attorney for the Muskegon County Prosecutor's Office.

The girl told Babbitt the incident had occurred when she chose to eat her lunch in the classroom on Feb. 2 while Morden was working on a computer, entering grades.

The girl answered questions by Babbitt confidently, in most cases, and stood up from her chair to demonstrate where on her pants and how under her shirt Morden had allegedly touched her.

She testified that the touching incident began when Morden lifted her up by putting his hands under her armpits when she was near the drinking fountain in the classroom. She told Babbitt that when Morden lifted her, she felt a "lump" in Morden's crotch area, and again when Morden allowed the girl to sit on his lap while he worked on the computer.

She testified that while on Morden's lap, facing the computer, he put his hands around her waist, underneath her two T-shirts she had on. His hands touched her bare back and sides, near the bottom of her sports bra band, she said.

The girl said the incident ended when she got off Morden's lap to blow her nose. She then left the classroom, walked down to the girl's bathroom "to think it over" and tried to decide who to tell first: Her mother or school officials.

She said she left the bathroom and went directly to the school office.

Davis asked the girl why she chose to eat lunch alone in the room with Morden when all the other students were eating in a lunchroom.

She told Davis that she wanted to eat in the classroom because Morden had allowed it days before while she and other friends worked on a banner.

Davis asked her if it was true that he also had picked her up on that day "like a sack of potatoes" -- holding her sideways under one arm -- and whether anything was wrong with that method of picking her up.

"I know teachers aren't supposed to pick up kids," she said.

"Who told you that?" Davis asked.

"I don't know, but someone did," she replied.

School officials sent out a letter to parents on Feb. 2 that explained the situation and indicated they "immediately discharged" Morden, escorted him out of the school and told him not to return or have any contact with students or staff.

Morden was placed in the school district through Western Michigan University. Student teachers placed in the Mona Shores district are not considered employees, so the district did not conduct a background check.

Davis said Morden has no prior criminal record.

# Prosecutors say suspect threatened to blow up Tuscola County Courthouse

Wednesday, April 12, 2006

By TOM GILCHRIST  
BAY CITY TIMES WRITER

As an ex-con, 40-year-old David J. Domine may not have kept his nose clean. Authorities claim he committed **felony child abuse** on his baby son - they hope to terminate his **parental rights** - and, on Friday, prosecutors accused him of threatening to blow up the Tuscola County Courthouse.

If convicted of making a threat of terrorism, Domine would face a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a \$20,000 fine.

Domine, of 4410 West St. in Cass City, remained in the Tuscola County Jail on Tuesday in lieu of posting a \$250,000 cash bond. He awaits an April 21 hearing on the evidence.

As conditions of his bond, Domine must not have any contact with Tuscola County Circuit Court Family Division Judge W. Wallace Kent Jr., or state **Department of Human Services** worker Dana Price.

Domine also must stay at least 1,000 feet away from the homes of Kent and Price, a children's services worker for the state agency.

Kent had been set to rule on Friday whether to terminate Domine's parental rights to his 6-month-old son, Bryce A. Domine. Police arrested Domine that day, though, in connection with the alleged terrorist threat.

Tuscola County Prosecutor Mark E. Reese said David Domine had been keeping tabs on Judge Kent and on Dana Price in recent weeks.

"Probably the right term is 'surveilling,' where he was doing this in a surreptitious manner, making observations of their movements," Reese said. "He had information about their whereabouts, personal information regarding them that would not have been readily accessible without going to some length and observing them."

Reese said police have gathered "verbal as well as some alleged written documentation" that Domine threatened to blow up the courthouse.

Sanilac County prosecutors, meanwhile, hope to convict Domine of first-degree child abuse, alleging Domine fractured the skull of his son in December in Greenleaf Township in the northwest corner of the county.

David Domine and the baby's mother, 19-year-old Jessie M. Spencer of rural Cass City, aren't married. Spencer seeks full custody of Bryce in Tuscola County Circuit Court.

Court records indicate David Domine said the head injuries to the baby happened accidentally as David Domine carried the child and accidentally fell, with the baby striking his head on a crib before falling to the floor.

# Bad Axe couple opens home and heart to dozens of foster children

STACY LANGLEY, The Huron Daily Tribune

04/10/2006

**BAD AXE** — For years, a Bad Axe family has opened its house and heart in helping area foster children in need of a place to temporarily call home. Along the way, the family has uncovered a passion for being advocates for many of these children often too small to be heard.

Looking back on how it all began, Kim Brown, a first-grade teacher at George E. Greene Elementary School in Bad Axe, said her husband Larry, "always said he wanted 12 children.

"And God only gave us two (biological) children," said Kim Brown.

In 1984, the Browns had their first child, Nich, followed by Tyler in 1987. It was an advertisement the couple stumbled across nearly 15 years ago in the newspaper seeking people interested in becoming foster parents for Huron County children which sparked their interest.

"We thought, 'Well let's look into it (foster parenting),' " said Kim Brown. "That was years ago."

Reflecting back, the couple laughed, saying at one point they stopped counting when the number of foster children who came to live with them surpassed 60 (children) — each and every one of the them cared for by the couple no matter how long or short of a stay.

"Only about half of them stayed with us more than six weeks. Some kids came over night until **DHS (Department of Human Services)** was able to find a grandma or other family member for them to live with," said Kim Brown.

But of those 30 children that were in the Browns' home six weeks or longer, some have stayed for a year or more.

"We adopted three of the children we were foster parents to. They're a sibling group, two sisters and a brother — they were here with us for three years," said Larry Brown. "So much time had passed that they were part of our family."

The Browns are licensed with the **Department of Human Services** to care for up to four foster children at a time at their home. And they don't dispute that some days are tougher than others.

"There are emotional ups and downs to being foster parents," said Kim Brown. "If I could learn how to help these children bond without bonding myself to them it would be a lot less stressful, but you just can't — especially when they're here for so long.

"If a child is only here for six weeks then it feels more like a visitor coming and going. But when you have a child with you from the time they come home from the hospital until the time they're two or more years old, it's very hard not just on us, but the other kids who live here, and on the child, too.

"It's asking the impossible at times. How can you care for a child and not get emotionally involved or attached? They need that kind of love and care. They didn't ask for the situation they're in."

Added Larry Brown: "Basically, what they (**DHS**) want a foster parent to do is feed, cloth and provide shelter, take the child to doctor's appointments, counseling and church. They don't want you to become emotionally attached or to take care of any of the child's emotional problems.

That's not part of your responsibility. But I say to be a good foster parent you need to be well-rounded and take care of every one of the child's needs the best you can."

Many of the children the couple has cared for often call the Browns "mom and dad."

"We allow them to call us whatever is comfortable for them," Larry Brown said.

The Browns are on a foster parent list right here in Huron County with **DHS**. From this list, **DHS** has when a child is in need of a temporary home. It will then call foster parents like the Browns to take the child or children in for whatever period of time needed.

"When they need us they call. It's not unusual to get calls in the middle of the night," said Kim Brown. "And sometimes they bring us kids in the middle of night, and sometimes we have a couple days to get things ready. To be a foster parent I'd say you have to be flexible."

The couple said thinking about being foster parents brings such a good feeling to them. And they are flooded with memories of the children who have come in and out of their lives.

"At one time, we were foster parents to 4-year-old twins. And at that time our son Tyler was 4 and our son Nich was 7. The twins had an older sister who was 7, so it was like having a set of twins and triplets at the same time," said Larry Brown, laughing.

The Browns said there's no telling just how long they will continue to be foster parents.

"I don't like the thought of giving up our (foster care) license. I just couldn't imagine not being able to help them if they needed us," said Kim Brown.

"I know there's a big need in Huron County for good foster parents. One thing that has always bothered me is the bad rap that foster parents get in the movies or on TV — and I don't know why that is. I don't know why anyone would become a foster parent if they didn't want to give a child the best home life they can.

"Anyone who thinks that you become a foster parent for the money is just crazy," she continued.

"There are lots of things people could do for money and being a foster parent is not one of them. Some of the stories you hear — I just don't understand. Why would someone become a foster parent to abuse an abused child — that doesn't make sense."

The couple says they've had all ages of foster children come to live with them. "We've found that small children and babies are the easiest for us to be foster parents for," Larry Brown said.

"When we go to church or to grandma's house, they go with us.

"And we don't have to take every child (**DHS**) calls about. We found what works for us is to find out who the child is, how old, and what kind of problems they have. And another thing we've learned is we can ask (**DHS caseworkers**) all the questions we'd like. They can't volunteer information to us about the child, but they can tell us the answers to our questions — if we ask the right questions."

The couple said when they were looking to become licensed, there were a number of tasks they had to complete in the licensing process, including a home inspection, physicals for everyone in the family, background checks on each of them, and training.

"All of that is easy," Kim Brown said. "The hardest part, really, is that anyone looking into becoming a foster parent needs to keep in mind the goal of being a foster parent is to return the children to their parents when problems in the home have been resolved through counseling, parenting classes, or whatever the plan is set up for the parent.

Kim Brown said **DHS** makes every attempt possible to place brothers and sisters together in the same foster home.

According to **DHS officials**, foster families for teenagers and sibling groups of three or more are always in high demand.

“We are vocal for the kids. We have become advocates for these children — someone has to,” said Kim Brown. “In our training, in the very beginning, we learned from an elderly woman who did foster care for a long time. Something she said always stuck with me. She said that case workers are too busy, and the lawyers who are defending these children usually don’t even get to know who they are defending.

“We are the people who are living with these children and we are the ones who care about them and love them. It’s up to us to stick up for them. I feel that’s exactly the way it goes.”

The couple said the system is set up to protect the rights of the parent and not the child.

“There have been some good changes in the way things are handled,” Larry Brown said. “When we first started we could go to the court hearing and mention things to the attorneys, but never get a chance to speak. We were like the public that had no voice. Now, we can and that’s been a good change for the foster children.”

Adds Kim Brown: “I think the system has lost touch of the childrens’ rights. The system is set up to protect the parents’ rights, not the childrens’ rights. It’s the legal system that has lost sight of the children — not **DHS**.”

Larry Brown goes on...

“What I’ve never been able to understand is when the court sets up a number of court-ordered objectives the parent has to meet to get the child back — like schooling, getting a GED, substance abuse counseling, getting a job, housing minimal standards — and the parent doesn’t do any of them, there are no consequences,” he explains.

“When they go back to court again, many times they haven’t completed or even started any of this. What I feel is that if it’s court-order, they should have to do it or suffer some sort of consequence for not doing it. I understand family court is designed to heal the family. But I think this is what needs to change.”

And when the time comes and the court feels it’s time to re-unite the children with their biological parents, the Browns said they usually have a gradual transition, like an overnight stay with the parents, then a weekend stay, then all week.

“We don’t just disappear out of their lives — that could be tragic for some kids,” said Larry Brown. “It all depends on how long they’ve been with us in how much time it takes to gradually work the children back into their parents’ home.

“While the kids are here with us we try to teach them life skills, things they can use all their life. It doesn’t matter if you have designer clothes, just as long as they are clean clothes. Some of these things, if they don’t learn them at home or at school, how are they going to know? They should still teach life skills in schools.”

The Browns said that being foster parents taught them a thing or two, as well. It has not only changed their lives, but it has made their own children different, too.

“It has made our kids more compassionate. Being a foster parent has made me more loving, more caring,” said Larry Brown.

“I’m less judgmental now, I think,” said Kim Brown. “With the dynamics of this family, foster care works for us. I think if we didn’t have all of this going on, I don’t know what we’d do. It would be pretty lonely here.”

Apr 13, 8:30 AM EDT

## **Mass. Leads Way in Health Care Coverage**

By STEVE LeBLANC  
Associated Press Writer

BOSTON (AP) -- By next summer, Massachusetts may cross a threshold that has eluded presidents, governors and other political leaders for generations by becoming the first state to require universal health care coverage.

Massachusetts took a major step toward that accomplishment Wednesday when Gov. Mitt Romney signed legislation designed to guarantee coverage for virtually all residents by July 2007, including an estimated 550,000 people who are now uninsured.

The law has set a standard for other states and thrust Massachusetts to the forefront of the national debate about how to dramatically expand health care coverage without creating a single government-controlled system.

Even as he signed the law amid fanfare at historic Faneuil Hall, Romney faced criticism for vetoing a key portion of the legislation: a \$295 per employee annual fee on businesses that do not provide their employees with coverage.

The law also provides subsidies and sliding-scale premiums to get poor and low-income residents into health plans and require those deemed able to afford insurance to purchase a policy.

"We have found a way, collectively, to get all of our citizens insurance without some new government-mandated takeover or a huge new tax program," Romney said.

Romney is weighing a potential run for the Republican presidential nomination in 2008 and the law could be a centerpiece of that campaign.

Speakers at the ticket-only signing event, attended by more than 300 people, included Democratic U.S. Sen. Edward Kennedy.

"After so many years of false starts, our actions have finally matched our words and we have lived up to our ideals," Kennedy said. "You have given Massachusetts just what the doctor ordered."

An ABC News-Washington Post poll of more than 1,000 adults nationwide released Wednesday found 55 percent of Americans would support a health care law similar to the Massachusetts model in their own states. Forty-one percent opposed. The poll had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Romney used his line-item veto power to strike eight portions of the bill, including the \$295 fee. He said the fee was not needed to pay for the reform.

Leaders of the heavily Democratic House and Senate have said they would override the vetoes. House Speaker Salvatore DiMasi called the vetoes disingenuous, saying the law was crafted with concessions and compromise.

"To change anything will disturb the delicate balance that made this law possible," DiMasi said.

Business and hospital leaders also criticized the veto of the fee. Massachusetts Hospital Association President Ron Hollander said it threatened the balance of the bill.

"I think it is important that all the parts and all the parties stay together," he said. "The employer assessment is critical."

Romney, speaking to reporters after the event, defended the action.

"There are many businesses who have been flooding my office with calls as well as business associations, that are very concerned about it," he said.

Under the law, those who can afford insurance but still refuse to get it will face escalating tax penalties.

The cost of the health care package was put at \$316 million in the first year, rising to more than a \$1 billion in the third year, with much of that money coming from federal reimbursements and existing state spending, officials said.

# New Mass. law requires all to get health insurance

**Subsidies to make it affordable; penalties to force compliance**

By STEVE LEBLANC

Associated Press

BOSTON — Gov. Mitt Romney signed legislation Wednesday that would make Massachusetts the first state to require everyone to have health insurance, just as drivers must have automobile coverage.

The law would make Massachusetts the only state with universal health coverage, employing a combination of subsidies and penalties to make insurance more affordable and to force people to buy it, too.

However, Romney vetoed a section imposing an annual \$295-per-worker fee on businesses that do not provide their employees with coverage.

The law has thrust the state to the forefront of the national debate over how to extend coverage to the uninsured without creating a single government-controlled system. Massachusetts has an estimated 550,000 uninsured.

The program is a potential political coup for Romney as he weighs a possible run for the Republican presidential nomination in 2008.

"The reason this is so landmark is that we have found a way, collectively, to get all of our citizens insurance without some new government-mandated takeover or a huge new tax program," he said.

The governor said the program would be financed largely with the millions of dollars that the state now spends on uncompensated medical care for poor people who show up at hospitals and clinics without health insurance.

By July 2007, everyone in Massachusetts will have to have health insurance. Under the plan, the state will offer free or heavily subsidized coverage to poor and lower-income people.

Those who can afford insurance but still refuse to get it will face escalating tax penalties. For example, they will lose the ability to claim a personal exemption on their state tax returns. That would cost an individual about \$189 and a couple filing jointly about \$378.

Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., who attended the signing ceremony, praised Romney for giving the state "just what the doctor ordered."

The cost of the program was put at \$316 million in the first year, rising to more than a \$1 billion in the third year. Much of that money will come from federal reimbursements and existing state spending, officials said.

About \$125 million in new money will come from the state's general fund each of the three years.



Romney

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## **Seniors confront Camp**

### **Congressman gets earful of frustration over drug plan**

By LINDA GITTLEMAN  
Gratiot Managing Editor  
The Morning Sun

An earload of pent-up frustration hit U.S. Rep. Dave Camp when he met with seniors at the Gratiot County Commission on Aging Wednesday.

Camp, R-Midland, was making the rounds throughout his district this week to answer questions on the federal senior drug prescription plan. "I'd like to say that this plan stinks," one woman told him. "I think every senior ought to stick it back to the government." The same woman told Camp he was wrong when he said that about 65 percent of the seniors nationwide had signed up for the program. She said she had heard on "Good Morning America" Wednesday morning that only 35 percent had. According to a published statement last week by Mike Leavitt, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, about 27 million people have signed up for the program. About 42 million would qualify. Seniors told Camp repeatedly that the Part D Medicare program was costing them more money than before. When he replied that most people were finding that it cut their prescription costs in half, audience members hooted. "Not here," they said. Gratiot seniors told Camp that they believe the drug costs have gone up – in part because of the plan. And when Camp said the market was driving the costs down, the seniors would hear none of it. "Oh no," they said in unison. He said that the plan did in fact provide help to those who had no prescription benefits. While he said he would listen to their complaints after the meeting, he wanted to hear the seniors' questions first. But most only wanted to tell him the difficulties they were having. One couple told him that the wife could only use brand name drugs. The generic drugs didn't work. They were told that under those circumstances, it was best to have the physician work with the senior to help them through the process of getting the brand name drugs - an exception under the plan. But the couple responded that the doctor told them that she was as helpless as they were in getting the proper medication through Plan D. Citing all the steps that have to be taken in order to get the proper medication, another woman told Camp of her frustrations. "People are running all over like a bunch of rats getting this or that. There's a lot of seniors that can't do that running around." She said a relative of hers finally received the drug she needed, but the \$160 drug cost her \$102 – not a big enough savings for all the running around. "It's like the Mafia," she said. "We're paying for protection and not getting it. It seems like the insurance companies and pharmaceuticals are ripping us off." Camp listened to one senior who told of his chemotherapy treatment. Although the treatment has ended, he was concerned that should he need further treatment, "with all the back and forth between the Veteran's Administration, his physician, and the drug plan," the approval would arrive too late. Camp told the man he was to call his office and he would make sure the man got his medication in a timely fashion. Deductibles, co-pays, premiums, costs higher than originally stated and the "doughnut hole" were all discussed. The "doughnut hole" occurs when the total drug cost for one person reaches \$2,250 within a year. After that, the senior has to pay the full purchase price along with the premium until the year ends. Commission on Aging Director Craig Zeese drafted a letter for

Camp. In it, he spoke of the locally owned pharmacies in the area who are issuing critically needed drugs while their customers wait for the paperwork approval. They are not getting reimbursed or the re-imbursement is too slow. Unlike the chains, they are not able to absorb the cost. When asked if this plan would ever become simpler, Camp said, "Yes, it's going to be refined." People went through much the same thing when Medicare was first established in the 1960s, he said. Seniors have until May 15 to sign up for the prescription plan.

# Events focus on Medicare prescription drug choices

HOMETOWN HEADLINES

GENESEE COUNTY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION  
Thursday, April 13, 2006

By Ron Fonger  
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Medicare beneficiaries have a series of chances to hear more about choosing a Medicare prescription drug plan.

The Valley Area Agency on Aging and the Michigan Medicare Medicaid Assistance Program are sponsoring an enrollment outreach event Tuesday and have several others scheduled in the future.

The enrollment process will continue through May 15.

Medicare beneficiaries should bring to the events a list of their current prescriptions, including name, dosage, how drug is taken and how often it is taken, as well as a Medicare card and driver's license.

For more information about registration requirements for the programs, call VAAA at (810) 239-7671.

The events scheduled are:

10 a.m.-3 p.m. Tuesday at Saint Mary Catholic Church, 2500 N. Franklin Ave., Flint.

=Noon-2 p.m. Wednesday at Burton Place, 2287 S. Center Road, Burton.

10 a.m.-3 p.m. April 20 at Memorial Healthcare, 826 West King St., Owosso.

Noon-2 p.m. April 25 at Roxbury Court, 292 Smith St., Clio.

6:30 p.m. May 1 at Mt. Calvary Baptist Church, 4805 N. Saginaw St., Flint.

=10 a.m.-3 p.m. May 5 at Loose Senior Center, 707 N. Bridge St., Linden.

=11 a.m.-3 p.m. May 8 at Haskell Community Center, 2201 Forest Hill Ave., Flint.

# Donation to boost health care for poor

Thursday, April 13, 2006

By Myron Kukla  
The Grand Rapids Press

HOLLAND -- Uninsured and lower-income patients, including students, will get a boost in health care thanks to an anonymous \$350,000 donation that will fund expansion of the area's Community Health Center and its Nurses in Schools program.

The donation is tied to the Holland Hospital Foundation raising a matching \$350,000 from hospital staff and the community by next March.

"This is a significant donation and may be the single-largest gift Holland Hospital Foundation has received in recent history," foundation Executive Director Todd Jacobs said. "The money was donated by a single family that wanted to do something good for the community but also wanted to remain anonymous," Jacobs said.

Part of the money will be used to create a procedure and exam room at the Community Health Center, which will cost about \$10,000 and help deliver more efficient health care to the 4,000 non-insured, under-insured and Medicaid patients.

The bulk of the donation and matching contributions will help cover about \$500,000 in operating costs in the center's \$1.2 million budget that comes from donations.

"We're seeing 90 to 100 new patients coming here a month, and a new room will be a great addition along with funds to carry out the work of the center," said Vickie Schuring, practice manager for the Community Health Center, 336 S. River Ave.

The center is jointly run by Holland Hospital and Michigan Medical PC, a physicians group that provides the administrative staff.

About \$50,000 of the donation is earmarked to expand the Nurses in Schools program. The hospital has nurses and aides in six area elementary schools.

"Having a school nurse is a great asset to the children and families we serve because the nurse works with families to make sure good health practices are followed and there is follow-up with doctors when needed," Harrington Principal Judy Burtch said.

# Free medical clinic fills need for uninsured

By Michael P. McConnell

Daily Tribune Staff Writer

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## Physicians focus on common problems, prevention

OAK PARK -- Every Wednesday afternoon patients with little or no medical insurance show up at a free clinic here to see a physician.

Sponsored by the Michigan Association of Physicians of Indian Origin, the clinic is run in space donated by Dr. Pramod Raval at his office at 24661 Coolidge.

State Rep. Andrew Meisner, D-Ferndale, was at the clinic Wednesday with Dr. Chandrika Joshi, MAPI president, to highlight the free medical services.

"MAPI answered a call to action to help us strengthen our social safety net as we face state and federal budget deficits," Meisner said.

In Michigan it is estimated that more than 15 percent of adults and almost 10 percent of children have no medical insurance, he added.

The MAPI charitable clinic in Oak Park is by appointment and began in May 2005. A second clinic is open on Saturday mornings Downriver in Taylor.

Most patients learn of the clinics through word-of-mouth and references from four health fairs MAPI conducts in southeast Michigan each year, Joshi said.

The Oak Park clinic is backed by Providence Hospital. One woman who recently came to the free clinic had a tumor removed at a reduced rate at the hospital, Joshi said.

Meisner applauds the work at the clinic as an example of what can be done when the private and non-profit sector steps in to meet the lack of medical treatment for many uninsured patients in an emerging national health-care crisis.

"It is saving us money," Meisner said.

For MAPI, however, the mission is focused on prevention.

"For us it is saving lives and improving the quality of life" for patients, Joshi said.

The Oak Park clinic draws on more than 25 physician volunteers who see patients on a rotating basis.

Joshi said the idea for free clinics came from what MAPI doctors saw when they offered several health fairs each year at hospitals or places of worship.

"We started seeing all these uninsured people," she said. "They often had high levels of cholesterol and diabetes and then we realized they had no where to go" for treatment.

The clinic is for people who have no medical insurance and don't qualify for government medical assistance.

A person living alone must earn less than \$9,310 a year, or \$18,850 for a four-person household, to qualify for the free clinic.

To contact the MAPI Charitable Clinic for an appointment call 248-914-8579.

Contact Michael P. McConnell at [mike.mcconnell@dailytribune.com](mailto:mike.mcconnell@dailytribune.com) or 248-591-2571.

4/13/2006 11:00:00 AM

## **Rally takes on domestic assault, sexual violence**

By Marcie Westover

Sturgis Journal

Over and over, the theme "To Ignore it is to Condone It" was voiced Wednesday at the "Take Back the Night" rally and march against sexual violence.

A group of professionals and citizens rallied outside Sturgis City Hall for the event.

Chris Amones, executive director of the Domestic Assault Shelter Coalition, said elevating awareness, educating communities and pulling together resources is a way to end sexual assault in St. Joseph County.

She encouraged people to speak out and act on the issue and not be another bystander to abuse.

St. Joseph County Prosecutor Doug Fisher and St. Joseph County Sheriff's Det. Lonnie Palmer shared the role of law enforcement officers in cases of sexual assault.

"In 2005, we had 46 criminal sexual conduct cases in this county," Palmer said.

There were also 140 domestic-type assaults that may have been unreported cases of sexual assault, he said.

Dr. Robin Thompson, who deals every day with women's health issues, including the prevalent issue of abuse, said providing children education on appropriate relationships is key.

"It's (sexual abuse) a far-reaching problem that affects many aspects of a woman's life," she said.

Giovanna Sabatini, a health teacher at Three Rivers Middle School, spoke about the education she provides students concerning sexual harassment.

She said students often don't know they can say no, or else they haven't been told by enough different people that it is OK to say no.

The Rev. JoAnn Mundy of the First Baptist Church shared a message of help and hope.

"We need to be able to give people, men and women, permission to say what happened, and we need to listen to them," she said.

Mundy encouraged people to be listeners and to act.

When there is a sexual assault, children are often unable to put it into words, but they still need to be heard, Mundy said.

A letter from Gov. Jennifer Granholm and a poem were also read at the rally.

There was a time for rally participants to speak about the issue of sexual violence. Then, the silent march wound through downtown Sturgis.

“Take Back the Night” originated in England, and is organized on behalf of victims of sexual violence.

Wednesday’s rally was sponsored by the St. Joseph County Task Force on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, Human Services Commission and the Domestic Assault Shelter Coalition.

Marcie Westover is a staff writer for the Journal. Contact her at [westover@sturgisjournal.com](mailto:westover@sturgisjournal.com).

## Support system gives women hope

Stephanie Antonian Rutherford

*The Battle Creek Enquirer*

Teresa Phillips remembers one night several years ago when she had four hungry kids and the only thing in her fridge was one package of pork chops. Her paycheck was days away.

In tears, the single mom called her new friend, Melissa Cook, whom Phillips had met when she moved from Toledo to the Triangle Mobile Home Park in Battle Creek.

"She said, 'Well I have some green beans and mashed potatoes, so tonight we are all eating together,'" Phillips said. "And it touched me that she was willing to share. I thought, I wish there was a way for other women to have that kind of support when they are down."

Phillips' and Cook's friendship and willingness to help each other bloomed within the Triangle community, where other women began to share food, baby-sitting and resources with each other. Soon, the women in the park were having weekly meetings at Phillips' kitchen table. It was there that the Woman's Co-op — a local organization that provides education, career development, child care and support services — was born.

The co-op opened its new office inside Trinity Lutheran Church in January. It has its own executive board, more than 100 active members and is a part of Trinity's Creating Change program. It also is a recipient of a Yes We Can! grant.

"The co-op provides a place for women to share with each other and feel accepted," Phillips said.

"I have been through substance abuse and **domestic violence** and so have many of the members. We can offer support to others in situations they might be going through."

For her work in creating a support system and providing free career and educational training for local women, Phillips received a 2006 George Award.

"Teresa has helped hundreds of women and their children by listening to their needs," said Donna Hazel of the Battle Creek Business and Professional Women's Club. "She helps women by teaching them to get through red tape, budget, cook, get an education and protect themselves from abuse."

At the co-op, weekly networking meetings are held where women can share resources. The co-op is free, but each member must give a certain amount of time each week, whether it's helping another member with child care, food or providing transportation.

"Everyone has something different they can offer each other," Phillips said. "So no one goes without."

Phillips said that when she moved to Battle Creek more than seven years ago, she felt that the demons of her past — substance abuse, **domestic violence** and bad choices — were too much to overcome.

After finding support with Cook and the women in her mobile home park, Phillips said she began to see her own worth.

"I think that when women learn to lean on each other and have a place to get unconditional love and support, it gives them self-esteem," she said. "Just having someone care is so important."

Now Phillips said her life is better than she ever dreamed. She works every day to help women better themselves. Phillips said she is a more positive role model to her four children, Jessie, 21; Sara, 16; Britney, 11; Dylan, 9; and her 2-year-old grandson, Damian.

"I was overjoyed and elated to get the George Award," Phillips said. "But what is most important is the women I can help. Sometimes I feel like I have more than 100 best friends."

*Stephanie Antonian Rutherford is a general assignment reporter. She can be reached at 966-0665 or [srutherford@battlecr.gannett.com](mailto:srutherford@battlecr.gannett.com).*

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Macomb County

NEWS IN A MINUTE: Macomb County

April 13, 2006

## **SHELBY TOWNSHIP: Caregiver is charged with embezzlement**

A woman accused of stealing more than \$30,000 from an elderly Shelby Township couple turned herself in Monday, police said.

Meissema Anita Godboldo has been charged with one count of embezzlement of a vulnerable adult for more than \$20,000.

Police said the 39-year-old, who was hired as a caregiver for a couple in their 90s, used their checkbook and credit card to make mortgage payments, buy Christmas presents and get cash from October to December.

Godboldo, who is being held in the Macomb County Jail on a \$200,000 cash bond, is scheduled for a preliminary hearing April 24 at 41A District Court.

*By Shabina S. Khatri*

# Officials unravel custody issues

Cheryl Wade, Midland Daily News

04/11/2006

A story that began as a kidnapping and ended as a case of dual parental custody brought home for Clare County's prosecutor the idea that children can become pawns when parents separate, he said.

Leah May Morse of Fowlerville was staying with her grandmother, Jane Wangler, in Harrison last weekend when she went missing. Wangler said she awoke at 2:30 a.m. Sunday and found the girl gone, bells on her door removed and her dog outside. The child's father, John Westley Morse Jr., had shown up at Wangler's door Friday night saying his brakes were out and he needed a place to stay. Wangler had let him in.

With what was thought to be a kidnapping case on the Clare County sheriff's hands, an Amber Alert was issued, notifying authorities around the country to be on the lookout for the little girl and her father in a 1991 Mercury four-door. Wangler said she had copied John Morse's license number.

The sheriff's office had obtained court documents stating Leah's mother, Terra Lynn Kriewell of Fowlerville, has sole custody of Leah. But because courts were closed for the weekend, it was not until Monday that authorities learned neither Kriewell nor John Morse had shown up in the Livingston County court for an Aug. 27, 2004 court hearing to determine custody. As a result, both parents -- whom Clare County authorities said never married -- had equal custody of Leah. Neither parent has a greater claim to custody than the other, said Clare County Prosecutor Norm Gage, so there's no kidnapping case. Although Leah's parents have not been together for three years, according to Wangler, John Morse could argue he has as much right to custody as Kriewell, Gage said.

"It's kind of a gray area in the law," he said. "That's why we strongly encourage people to get a custody order."

Hopefully, Gage said, one of these parents will get a court order.

"Children shouldn't be pawns," he said.

Clare County Sheriff Jeff Goyt said Wangler had received a call from John Morse 24 hours before he showed up at her door. He had asked for Kriewell's number, but Wangler wouldn't give it to him. But she allowed Leah to talk to her father on the phone. Monday morning, authorities learned Morse's car had been located at his residence.

Goyt said Leah's name remains in the Law Enforcement Information Network.

"There's no indication that the child is facing any harm," Goyt said. But if authorities see Morse's car, they're advised to make certain of Leah's well-being.

## **Wanted: Qualified homeowners for Habitat house**

By ERICA KOLASKI  
Cheboygan Daily Tribune

Tribune Staff Writer

CHEBOYGAN - As Cheboygan County Habitat for Humanity is set to break ground on its 16th home in Cheboygan County, organizers are still seeking a family to occupy the fully constructed Habitat home on Harrison Avenue.

Noreen Purcell, a member of Habitat's family selection committee, said that the group typically selects a family prior to building the home, but that this particular family was unable to move in.

"We had selected this family before we built the Harrison Avenue home," she said. "However, this family had to back out."

She said that the committee is looking for a family that has at least four children. "Normally, we build a three-bedroom home, but in this case, it was four."

The home has four bedrooms, a kitchen, dining area, living room and one bathroom and is located on a standard city lot at 1866 Harrison Ave.

In addition to having at least four children, the family selected to occupy the home must also meet Habitat for Humanity requirements such as the ability to make payments and the need for a home, said Purcell.

The home was finished in December of 2005. The Spring Lake Christian Reformed Church youth group, the St. James Lutheran youth group from Verona, Wis., members of the St. Thomas Lutheran Church men's group, members of the Cheboygan Kiwanis Club and employees of First Community Bank also contributed to the Harrison Avenue project.

Habitat for Humanity International is a nonprofit, ecumenical Christian organization dedicated to eliminating substandard housing and homelessness worldwide and to making adequate, affordable shelter a matter of conscience and action.

Habitat is founded on the conviction that every man, woman and child should have a simple, decent affordable place to live in dignity and safety.

For more information on the Harrison home, or to volunteer with Cheboygan County Habitat for Humanity, call 597-4663.